Statement of Charles Bolden
Before the Committee on Commerce, Science and Transportation
United States Senate
July 8, 2009

Chairman Rockefeller, Ranking Member Hutchison, and members of the Committee, it is an honor to come before you today as the President's nominee for Administrator of the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA). Thank you for your time in considering my nomination as well as that of Ms. Lori Garver for Deputy Administrator.

I would like to extend my sincere thanks to Senator Lindsey Graham for his support and kind introduction. Special thanks are also due to Senators Nelson and Hutchison for your words of encouragement during my preparation for potentially taking on the duties of NASA Administrator. I thank both of you specifically and this committee in general for your long-standing support of NASA in its mission of leading the nation in the exploration of our universe and of exercising our leadership in aeronautics, science, and technology. I'd also like to acknowledge members of my family (my wife, Jackie; my daughter, Dr. Kelly Bolden; my brother, Warren Bolden and his wife, Wendy; my aunt Alyce Martin) and other family and friends who have traveled many miles to be with me today.

I would also like to extend a special thanks to Christopher Scolese, who has been the Acting Administrator at NASA since mid-January. Chris represents the very best of NASA's career civil servant workforce. For his dedicated leadership and service I am greatly appreciative.

I was born and raised in Columbia, SC in the segregated south – the older of two sons of Charles and Ethel Bolden, public school teachers who, despite very long hours and lower wages than their white counterparts, loved every day of their work and made the hard choice to remain in public education and to inspire thousands of Black students to take their places in national, state, and local leadership. With them as the consummate role models, I overcame the refusal of my Senators and Congressman to appoint a Black to the Naval Academy by appealing to President Lyndon B. Johnson for assistance. President Johnson had taken the initiative to send a retired federal judge around the country to visit with Black and Hispanic high schools to recruit young, qualified minorities for entry to the three major service academies. I expressed interest in the Naval Academy during his visit to my high school and this led to my subsequently receiving an appointment to Annapolis from Congressman William Dawson of Chicago, IL. Inspired by my Plebe Year company officer, Major John Riley Love, a Marine Corps Viet Nam veteran and mentor reminiscent of my father, I chose to become a United States Marine upon graduation. Much like my father, Major Love was very tough and demanding, but incredibly fair and just in dealing with everyone. For more than 34 years as an active duty Marine, I witnessed the

power of teams of diverse military men and women responding to worldwide crises of humanitarian assistance and disaster relief, such as the small 16 to 20 person teams of Marines and Navy corpsmen sent from my command into Djibouti in the Horn of Africa to help drill fresh water wells and to assist the villagers in building rudimentary medical centers. The engagement and compassion exhibited by these Marines and sailors gained us a level of respect by the local tribe members that allows us to operate with impunity in this region even today.

As a NASA astronaut I flew four times on the Space Shuttle as a member of international teams of dedicated engineering and science professionals. Floating in the windows of the Shuttle, speeding across its great desert at 4 – 5 miles per second, I saw the beauty of the Middle East, appearing peaceful and serene in spite of the Earthly reality of violence in the region. From my window perch, I viewed with sadness the majestic Amazon Rain Forest, considered by many to be the model of serenity and peace, yet devastated by deforestation, leaving the area and its people facing some of the greatest environmental challenges of our day. I now dream of a day when any American can launch into the vastness of outer space and see the magnificence and grandeur of our home planet, Earth, as I have been blessed to do. I'm convinced this will inspire them to be more concerned for our environment and to strive to put an end to man's inhumanity to man.

When I reflect on the violent days of the 1960's civil rights movement; war in Viet Nam and anti-war demonstrations on our streets; turmoil and division in our nation not seen since the Civil War – I am inspired by the power of a shared national vision articulated by President John F. Kennedy to put men on the Moon; uniting the world in celebrating this achievement; and assuming uncontested technological leadership. NASA and its contractors produced what is a marvel of the modern age – the Space Shuttle followed by the International Space Station (ISS). With the common goal of making life better for humans here on Earth and improving understanding of our universe, NASA provided the leadership to our scientists, industry, and international partners to launch probes to distant planets; change human understanding of the universe in which we live with the Great Observatories – the Hubble Space Telescope (HST), the Chandra X-Ray Telescope, the Compton Gamma Ray Observatory (GRO), and the Spitzer Space Telescope – and develop biomedical research that contributed to innovation of the CATScan, magnetic resonance imaging (MRI), the Debakey Ventricular Assist Device (VAD) or heart pump, and even a prospective salmonella vaccine.

All this we accomplished in times equally as difficult as today, if not more so because, beginning in 1961, a young president and a bold Congress inspired the American people to have the courage to take action in areas previously unthinkable. Can we do any less today? I think not.

Dr. Shirley Jackson, President of Rensselear Polytechnic Institute, warns – "There is a quiet crisis building in the United States — a crisis that could jeopardize the nation's pre-eminence and well-being. The crisis has been mounting gradually, but inexorably, over several decades. If permitted to continue unmitigated, it could reverse the global leadership Americans currently enjoy. The crisis stems from the gap between the nation's growing need for scientists, engineers, and other technically skilled workers, and its production of them…. Our government, universities, and industry must act now to develop the intellectual capital of the future."

Today we have to choose. Either we can invest in building upon our hard earned world technological leadership or we can abandon this commitment, ceding it to others who are working vigilantly to push the frontiers of space.

If we choose to lead, we must earn that leadership by committing to confront the following challenges:

- **Build** upon our investment in the ISS, a unique national laboratory, and a bridge to human exploration beyond low Earth orbit, as we safely and efficiently bring the shuttle era to a close.
- **Accelerate** with a sense of urgency the development of a next generation launch system and human carrier to enable America and other space-faring nations of the world to execute the mission of expanding our human exploration beyond low Earth orbit.
- **Enhance** NASA's capability and organic expertise to provide credible scientific, technological, and engineering leadership to help us better understand our Earth environment.
- **Inspire** the rising generation of boys and girls to become men and women committed to increasing knowledge in the fields of science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) by making NASA and its programs relevant to the American public.

Today we face a crisis of opportunity. We can either confront the aforementioned challenges of technological leadership that ensure our nation's safety and security or cede that leadership and prestige to other nations. I ask each of you to help NASA turn these challenges into opportunities. I ask each of you on this Committee as well as your colleagues in the Congress to help us ensure that safety and mission success are the preeminent principles in our continuation and extension of human exploration. And I ask all of you to help NASA ensure that our nation remains the leader in the world in aeronautics, technology, science, and the care of our environment.

Together we can find innovative ways to enhance our nation's educational, scientific and technological capacity or we can sit by and watch other nations assume our long-held and recognized leadership role.

Together we can find innovative ways to enhance needed basic research and development in aeronautics, science and technology or we can sit by and watch other nations move ahead in these fields.

Together we can find innovative ways to advance space exploration, reduce the costs of access to space and further push the boundaries of what we can achieve as a nation.

Thank you for this opportunity to appear before this committee. I am excited and energized about the possibility of taking on these challenges, if confirmed, and I look forward to responding to your questions.